



Morning Alert - Thursday, August 3, 2017

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## HEADLINES

### Morning news

Most TV networks and national dailies led with reports on the planned cabinet reshuffle this afternoon, highlighting Prime Minister Abe's decision to tap Seiko Noda as internal affairs minister and Taro Kono as foreign minister. NTV led with a report on an incident in Nagasaki on Tuesday in which a man suffered a minor injury when bungee jumping.

## POLITICS

### Prime Minister Abe to reshuffle cabinet today

All papers reported heavily on Prime Minister Abe's plan to change his cabinet lineup today, noting that former Administrative Reform Minister Taro Kono will lead the Foreign Ministry, while Seiko Noda, who has been rather critical of the prime minister, will be tapped as internal affairs and communication minister. Former Agricultural Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi, who is respected as an all-round policy expert, will become education minister. Deputy Agriculture Minister Ken Saito will be promoted to agriculture minister, and LDP Policy Research Council Chairman Toshimitsu Motegi will be appointed economic and fiscal policy minister. The articles also said Abe plans to tap LDP lawmaker Yoko Kamikawa as justice minister and LDP Research Council Deputy Chairman Onodera as defense minister, explaining that this will be the second time for the two lawmakers to hold these cabinet posts. Minister in charge of Promoting Dynamic Engagement of All Citizens Katsunobu Kato will be asked to assume the post of health and welfare minister.

### Premier to stop relying on "friends"

The papers said that in selecting new cabinet members, the premier apparently tried to reach out to veteran politicians and parliamentarians who are not necessarily close to him, such as Seiko Noda,

in an attempt to demonstrate that he is willing to play up party unity by distancing himself from his “friends” amid rising public criticism of his “arrogance.” Yomiuri quoted an unnamed senior LDP official as saying: “The prime minister is hoping to call attention to his humble approach of listening to the views of his party critics.”

As for the appointment of Noda as internal affairs minister, Asahi said the prime minister is apparently trying to bring her under control as she is reportedly very close to Tokyo Governor Koike and the popular Tokyo leader is reportedly looking to convert her Tomin First Party into a national party in preparation for the next general election. It has been projected that Koike’s party would easily outperform the LDP in Tokyo and other metropolitan areas if a snap election were held today.

#### Kishida’s presence to grow

As for the expected departure of Foreign Minister Kishida from the cabinet, the papers said that although the prime minister wanted to retain him as the nation’s top diplomat, Abe in the end accepted Kishida’s strong desire to take up a key LDP portfolio in an attempt to enlist his faction’s full support in shoring up the administration’s weakening power base. Pointing out that Abe heeded Kishida’s request for the premier to tap four of his faction’s politicians as cabinet ministers, the dailies projected that Kishida will probably try to assist the beleaguered premier as much as possible in the hope of ensuring Abe’s support in his bid to seek the party presidency after Abe steps down in the future. Mainichi said the fate of the new Abe cabinet may depend on the level of support to be extended by Kishida.

#### **Ex-premier criticizes Abe for controlling appointments at government agencies**

Tokyo Shimbun led with a Kyodo interview with former Prime Minister Fukuda, who criticized the Abe administration for upsetting the order within government ministries and agencies by controlling appointments of key ministry officials. “Ministry officials from the mid-career ranks and above are all paying close attention to the Kantei while carrying out their duties,” said Fukuda. “This is pathetic. The country is on the brink of collapse.” Speaking on the Cabinet Bureau of Personnel Affairs, which was launched in 2014 by the Abe administration with the goal of selecting and appointing senior ministry officials who are supportive of the administration’s policy agenda, Fukuda said: “Politicians must not get involved in personnel appointments. Setting up the bureau was the Abe administration’s biggest mistake.”

#### **INTERNATIONAL**

#### **Kono to make diplomatic debut next week**

Sankei wrote that Taro Kono, who will be appointed foreign minister today, will probably hold individual talks with Secretary of State Tillerson, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang, and his ROK counterpart Kang on the margins of the ASEAN Foreign Ministerial conference to be convened in Manila starting on Sunday. Kono will also probably take part in trilateral foreign ministerial meetings

with the U.S. and South Korea and with the U.S. and Australia. In all of the bilateral and trilateral sessions, North Korea will probably be the key discussion item.

### **U.S., Japan, ROK hold videoconference on DPRK provocations**

Most papers reported that defense officials of the U.S., Japan, and South Korea held a videoconference yesterday in response to North Korea's latest ICBM launch over the weekend, with the U.S. participants underscoring Washington's defense commitment to the two Pacific allies. The U.S. officials reportedly mentioned America's readiness to employ "all types of conventional weapons and nuclear weapons" for the defense of the key partners. All the attendees agreed to improve their own missile defense capabilities and enhance bilateral and trilateral security cooperation through joint training and other means based on the assessment that following the two ICBM launches, North Korea's missile development has become a "realistic" threat not only to Northeast Asia but also to the United States.

### **U.S. economic policy stalled due to two key officials' lack of political experience**

Yomiuri carried a prominent inside-page article on the absence of significant achievements in the Trump administration's economic policy, attributing it to the lack of political experience of Commerce Secretary Ross and National Economic Council Director Cohn, whom the daily described as the "economic commanders" of the administration. The article said although the two officials were highly successful Wall Street businessmen, they did not hold any public offices previously and their consequent lack of expertise in backdoor negotiations has made coordination with Congress on such key policy agenda items as tax reform and infrastructure investment considerably difficult. The daily voiced concern that the two officials may be tempted to resort to protectionist trade policies in order to deflect attention from the paucity of economic achievements.

### **Ambassador Kennedy played key role in persuading President Obama to visit Hiroshima**

Tokyo Shimbun filed a prominent article on behind-the-scenes episodes within the Obama administration related to President Obama's decision to visit Hiroshima in May last year, noting that the president heeded advice from Ambassador Kennedy and Secretary of State Kerry in deciding to make the historic visit to Hiroshima despite opposition from National Security Advisor Rice and other NSC officials only a week before the official announcement of the trip was made on May 10. Deputy National Security Advisor Rhodes reportedly said that Ambassador Kennedy "played a significant role as a proponent." Rhodes also disclosed that when visiting the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, President Obama examined various materials such as photos showing the devastation of the city caused by the atomic bombing.

<b>SECURITY</b>
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**Nago mayoral election slated for Feb. 4**

Most papers reported that the Nago municipal election steering committee formally decided on Wednesday to hold a mayoral election on Feb. 4 next year, projecting that the ongoing FRF construction off Camp Schwab will be the biggest campaign issue. LDP municipal assembly member Toguchi is expected to challenge incumbent Mayor Inamine, who is a staunch opponent of the base realignment plan.

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